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ABSTRACT

This guide offers teachers and senior high school students the simple facts of how he can make a difference in the operation of the two-party system in the United States at the precinct level. It also attempts to show that students, teachers, the school curriculum, and our American political structure definitely need large numbers of high school students working in the election process. The handbook suggests many specific activities to implement such a plan. Moreover, it attempts to demonstrate that these plans are practical by relating the specific projects participated in by the Des Moines East High School students in a span stretching more than two decades. Finally, a section is devoted to listing names of people who have worked with youth through the school in political work. All this is discussed in an attempt to help anyone interested in instituting a political action program by providing answers for those who might be apprehensive about moving into such a program. (FDI)

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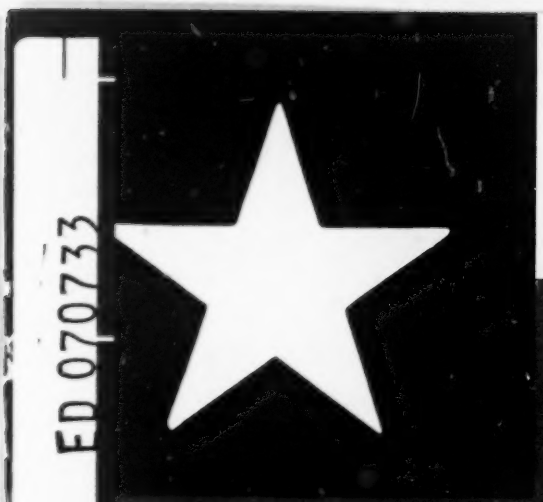

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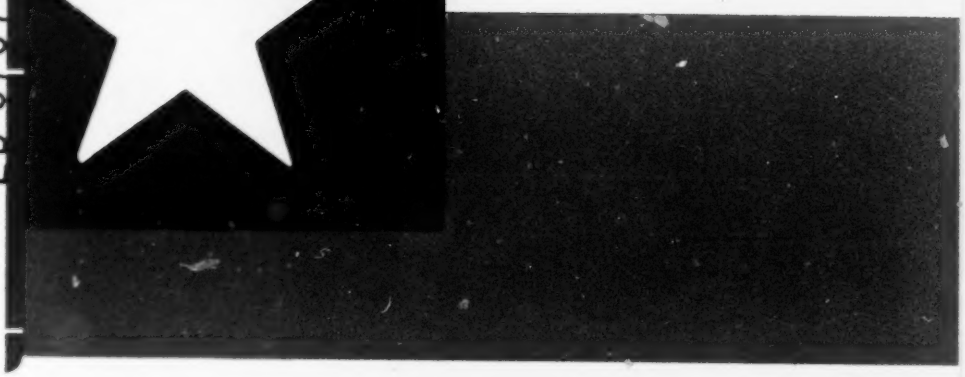

MANUAL
ON
POLITICAL ACTION

SP 005165

"Students Will Make a Difference"

by

Minnekus Schakel

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Short summaries of this political action story also appeared in the January issue of MIDLAND SCHOOLS, and in an Iowa State Department of Education publication, September of 1972.

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MANUAL

ON

POLITICAL ACTION

by

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Des Moines

$1.00 per copy

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Preface

Since the "coming of age" of the high school senior, no other event has the potential for political power--and governmental improvement--as the young men and women entering the political arena.

This guide offers every teacher--and every senior--the simple facts of how he can make a difference in the operation of the two-party system in the United States at the precinct level.

If the high school seniors are given a chance to furnish the grass roots support to political parties, this guide will have been worth the effort.

Walter Galvin,
Past President, ISEA

George Hampel, Jr.
Executive Director, DMEA

The manual has been reviewed by members of the DMEA Governmental Affairs Committee.

Part I

Introduction - Purpose

During in-service workshops for Iowa teachers in 1971 and 1972, considerable interest was evinced in political action by high school students, and, in particular, how to incorporate such work into the school curriculum. The teachers were apprehensive about the feasibility of such an activity, and the same questions surfaced in each meeting. Teachers especially enjoyed asking the student participants of the program specific questions and were delighted with the candid answers. THIS HANDBOOK IS FRANKLY AN ATTEMPT TO HELP ANY TEACHER OR ADMINISTRATOR BRING POLITICAL ACTION INTO HIS HIGH SCHOOL'S CURRICULUM BY PROVIDING ANSWERS TO THESE RECURRENT QUESTIONS.

The handbook attempts to show that students, teachers, the school curriculum, and our American political structure definitely need large numbers of high school students working in the election process. It suggests many specific activities to implement such a plan. Further, it attempts to show that these plans are practical by relating the specific projects participated in by Des Moines East High School students in a span stretching more than two decades. Finally, a section is devoted to listing names of people who have worked with youth through the school in political work. All this is developed in an attempt to help anyone interested in instituting a political action program by providing answers for those who might be apprehensive about moving into such a program.

Part II

Need for High School Political Action

The late Vince Lombardi was not only a great football coach, he was a keen student of human nature. Lombardi did not neglect fundamentals--he stressed them--but his teams wouldn't have won a game had they never scrimmaged. The fastest way to kill interest in anything is to talk it to death; read and talk about, but never to participate. All history and no scrimmage would make even football a dull game.

For a million years man learned by doing and then he invented books. Sometimes we rely on reading about it when doing it would be a better way to learn. DesCartes pointed to caged rabbits and observed, "There are my research books." Government teachers have always realized that the band teacher uses musical instruments; the salesmanship students went out and sold, and had a national D.F.C.A. organization; woodshop classes built coffee tables and sometimes houses; auto shop students actually worked on cars; but social studies classes spent eight semesters reading about the history and activities of government.

A political action class will demonstrate for you why even a Vince Lombardi had his teams scrimmage instead of relying on reading about football year in and year out. By the time our students are graduating, they are not only turned out, but turned off. There is little carry-over from history books to participating in elections. Most Americans don't care to run for an office. Most Americans feel that most politicians serve special interests. A common attitude is "Who would help me, if I did run?", and the idea is then dismissed. Our high school graduates usually know little of working in precincts or through party machinery. They probably didn't register and most young people didn't begin to vote until age 25. The 18-year olds now vote. The very

least we should be able to expect of a high school government course, in a democracy, is that the student would register to vote. At best we should be able to develop in-service, interning, experience-centered curriculums to stimulate interest in government jobs and the election process.

Grass Roots - The Key

Democracy in America needs young people to be introduced into career jobs in an informed political governmental atmosphere. Unfortunately, a career in politics is often the haven for people dissatisfied with their work. The emotional and physical drains and insecurity in elective office are largely the result of apathetic and fickle voter response. Too often, in self defense, special interests will put up a candidate to log roll and trade votes in the legislature in order to have their voice heard. To be effective, a legislator might have to trade votes to get support for his special interest--environment, education, longer trucks, or what have you--with other legislators, and then find himself supporting bills he really didn't like.

The late U.S. Senator Thomas Martin of Iowa, after his defeat for re-election, once wrote the students at East High who had helped him, thanked them for their support, and then bitterly observed that he'd had almost no grass-roots help, only money from the National Central Committee's war chest. Senator Martin felt that his opponent had been willing to make committments that he, the incumbent senator, had been unwilling to make. A 16-year veteran legislator, upon retirement from the Iowa Senate, commented that there was no place to go except the governorship, and he wouldn't make the committments to special interests in order to raise that kind of money for his campaign. Recently a suggestion was made here in Iowa by two state officials that the candidate for governor should recommend to the convention a running mate (for lieutenant governor) who would be an aide instead of presiding in the

senate, where often the lieutenant governor is kept busy short-circuiting bills to dead end committees.

Log Rolling and Apathy

Even a casual observance of newscasts or perusal of newspaper headlines should make it obvious that our Iowa general assembly is like a chow-line with no guard -- the lobbyists dash to the front of the line with their bills, and public interest bills are neglected. Furthermore, because of apathy which eight semesters of social studies apparently doesn't resolve, if a legislator doesn't get in there to log roll, his bill doesn't come up, or will be buried and reburied by a hostile leadership with a hostile committee chairman. In the 1972 Iowa legislature one education bill was routed out four times, and re-assigned four times, before 26 senatorial signatures put it, under leadership protest on the agenda.

A recent trend in education is to abandon social studies requirements--the students don't see them as relevant, so schools relax requirements. Certainly in this age of credibility gaps there is need for more interest and participation. Some people feel the present curriculum isn't meeting the need. IOWA'S SENATOR HAROLD HUGHES, DURING THE HEIGHT OF COLLEGE UNREST, TELEGRAPHED THE STUDENT BODY PRESIDENTS OF IOWA'S TWENTY-FIVE COLLEGES TO ABANDON DEMONSTRATIONS AND GET INTO PARTY ORGANIZATION. THEY DID, AND NOMINATED GEORGE MCGOVERN. Some Democrats believe moderate young people should have been working for Senator Muskie. Should young Nixon supporters have been more active?

The 1968 Eugene McCarthy meteoric rise which may have led to President Johnson's decision not to run again should have warned people everywhere to enlist the help of all young people in politics. The 18-year old vote has apparently awakened a slumbering worker potential more powerful than all the television advertising combined.

Upon graduating and realizing that there is little carry-over from social studies book theory to government in action, many an American shrugs his shoulders and wonders how much longer we'll cut timber without planting trees; knows that since the masses are uninformed and not working for public interest bills that he is helpless, too, so he turns to the sports page, Congress passes a $440 billion debt limit, and Lockheed flounders again while voting their retirees $60,000 pensions!

"Scrimmage" can change apathy to interest, vandalism to precinct work, special interest legislation to public interest laws, the credibility gap to leveling with the public, lavish campaign budgets[1] to grass-roots efforts--in short, democracy means the power of the people, yet our social studies program produces a 20 percent voter turnout at the primary. IN FACT, IF THOSE WHO DID NOT VOTE HAD VOTED FOR THE LOSER IN ANY ELECTION ANYWHERE IN AMERICA, IT IS DOUBTFUL IF ONE PERCENT OF OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS WOULD BE IN OFFICE NOW.

Politicians are fond of believing that they speak for the great American silent majority. The far left and the far right are lighting the way--it should become obvious that the great middle groups could be represented by curriculum-organized high school participation.

[1] In 16 of the 1970 national elections the big-budget candidate lost--the voters may have become suspicious of the source of the money. The more money you spend, the more you need to spend to overcome the suspicions induced by the big spending.

Part III

A Plan for High School Political Action

The far-right and special-interest activities are, of course, always in evidence. Many people fear the far left, the ultra "individual-liberty" liberals as opposed to the "rights-of-the-general-public" group. However, little is done to encourage participation of the masses of middle-of-the-road, industrious, average American young people. Political activity is left to the foot-loose, away-from-home groups. Moderates and conservatives in politics would do well to take note and give the great majority of students who have close hime ties encouragement to also participate. Schools could let them compile hours of independent study, guided by political party workers and candidates, throughout their school careers. When these students are seniors, they might even have a time-block schedule for a month or six weeks during a campaign. The political action student might have a half day, trading with a shop, art, or similar class and making up the time after the election.

Students need this experience and America needs their help. If this activity in politics is simply left as an afterthought, with no credit or recognition, the average student will be somewhat reluctant to participate. He will reason that he is being exploited, and if it were really as important as other classes, there'd be a provision made for it. Here are some suggestions for political action learning experiences.

FIRST - POLITICAL ACTION AS PART OF THE CURRICULUM

A. Designate a teacher to keep a record of letters and notes documenting the time, place, and kind of work done by the students. Have a notation made on the student's transcript--"Political Action", as is currently done for Latin Club, Band, etc.

B. Schedule a last-hour class of students who are activists, who perhaps have cars available, and with time after school hours to do some political work for a few weeks. It isn't practical to leave school, work for a short while, and get back for the next class, all in one class period.

C. Have students turn in records, verified by party officials, then actually give them Political Action credits; e.g., 90 hours work by the student equals 1/2 unit or 45 hours equals 1/4 unit of school credit.

D. Schedule a time-block arrangement whereby the political action class meets two or three times a week, alternating with another class which might prefer longer periods. This would provide time for the students to actually go outside the school and do participation activities.

E. Organize political clubs through which the adult party members can contact students, and hold club meetings after school.

F. Beware of having too many simulation activities. The student may suspect that he is once more going to be compared and graded. Further, when students go to actual conventions, it is fun and offers lasting learning experiences with real carry-over values. When a student comes back to school with real canvassing activity stories, with discoveries that were his own, then the student, not the teacher, is the center of attention and interest. Some simulation of precinct meetings or convention activities may be a great help, too. If a student got "taken" at some caucus by a parlimentary gambit, he might wish he had been forewarned! The techniques used to steal control of a precinct or party caucus might well be studied.

Conclusion: Anarchy-type demonstrations are an indication that we have neglected to help our

young people to see a way to use their talents constructively. Let's give democracy a chance--and let's give youth who would love to do headline news kind of activities a chance to become a part of a grass-roots democracy. America's real danger is apathy, government by default, by special interest, or government in retaliation for radicalism.

SECOND - HIGH SCHOOL POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

In political action workshops for teachers the first question usually evolved around, "What do you do? What should I put in my unit plans to present with my request for permission to develop a unit on political action?" Here are some suggestions·

A. Contact some "young-at-heart" political worker or officeholder to talk to the class. This initial introduction can well be nonpartisan. Even then it might be well to get two speakers, one from each party, to split the day e.g. one for morning classes, one for the afternoon.

B. Get two or three good films on "How to Win Elections"--your discussion and follow-up is then to implement your plans and contacts with various people in the community. Your area college or usual film source has films on political action, e.g. "Tuesday in November" or "How to Win Elections." Political parties may have training films.

C. During an election campaign have candidates come to school to speak. Schedule them so that both (or all) sides have a chance, and that all social studies classes will be invited to listen. Give all students the opportunity to volunteer for work with the political parties.

D. Help students become active in registration drives, telephone canvassing, fund-raising drives, in delivering handbills, in precinct meetings and conventions. The co-chairmen for a successful

candidate's upset of a well-financed incumbent machine were both teenagers who had more than 200 student helpers. Adults are busy at work. The students love to get away from the books, and they have time to really canvass.

E. Help students develop sets of enlarged precinct maps, so that they can systematically sign up for specific blocks to canvass.

F. Assist students in the organization of political clubs. Local officials of the party will be eager to work with them, and the teacher will be free to keep detailed records of all the activities for each of the students. At East High in Des Moines one teacher helped all parties--it might be well to have separate teachers volunteer for the different clubs.

G. Student workers may attend (for perhaps $2.00) the $50-a-plate banquets, get elected to county conventions in competition with old pros, receive tickets to the inaugural ball (which the teacher won't get), and meet state and national officials. The incidents that occur while canvassing and in caucuses which students report back to the classes are often hilarious and a tremendous spur to develop interest on the part of other students. Citizens complain about job-holders and the special interests filling the political vacuum, but the average American is busy with his job. Students make excellent canvassers and organizational workers, and this builds their interest in real grass-roots democracy. Further, it gives the candidate a chance to develop a public-interest program and to be relieved of embarrassing special interest help.

For almost two decades, following every election in Des Moines, county job holders would bitterly complain to reporters that they had been threatened with loss of jobs if they didn't work for their boss all election day. Every person in politics knows that getting precinct workers is a real

problem. Since students like doing these jobs, it relieves the elected officials of owing favors.

H. Help plan election day activities. From 3:30 a.m. when the polling area signs go up until poll-closing time, it will be one round of poll-watching, babysitting, telephoning those who haven't voted yet, runners carrying to central headquarters lists of names of those who have voted (and not voted), driving voters to the polls, and finally, to cap the day's activities, the election night parties at the homes of candidates or at various campaign headquarters to watch the returns come in.

I. Make contacts with precinct committeemen, if the community is organized. The county chairman will furnish you with the names of his precinct committeeman. If it isn't organized, help build the organization.

THIRD - ORGANIZING FOR THE ELECTION

The strength of a political party lies in the ability of each precinct committeeman to deliver the vote on election day, and this is accomplished by making lists of names, addresses, and phone numbers of each precinct's potential voters whom the party's block worker feels will vote for the candidate or the party.

The simplest way to begin building such a list of potential voters for which your groups will be responsible on election day is to copy the voter registration books at the auditor's office. The party workers must acquaint themselves with the boundaries of the precinct in which they work so that the addresses on the list will be within the district or precinct being worked. If up-to-date precinct voting books are available, the work is further simplified.

An even more effective approach, when workers are

available, is to make an enlarged map of each precinct (perhaps using an opaque projector) on large sheets of oaktag, and to have each worker put his name on the blocks he will cover. The party worker rings a doorbell and informs the occupant that he is working on voter registration. He puts the voter's name, address, and phone number on a file card and, if the potential voter isn't registered, the worker has a name for the registration squad. If the resident is registered as an independent, the block worker has a prospect for handbill and election-day phone lists. If some handbills are available at this time, it is usually quite simple, as the folder is handed to the voter, to find out in which party he is registered. If this affiliation is unknown, keep him as a possibility. If the voter is known to be a dyed-in-the-wool, straight ticket opposition voter, mark the card as a lost cause. If, in the opinion of the canvasser, follow-up work might get you a vote, work it. This may shock some student workers, but the usual procedure, upon returning to headquarters, is to destroy known-opposition cards so that time and energy are not expended driving the opponents to the polls.

After the precincts have been canvassed, check with the central committee, the county chairman, or the candidates for any handbills to be delivered. As election day approaches, be ready to have the signs put up at the polling places on election morning. If parties are poorly organized, each candidate's own workers will have to go to every polling place. If it is well organized, the precinct committeeman will simply put up all the signs for his party's candidates at that voting place.

Babysitting and Free Rides

The lists of your party's potential voters should be duplicated, and a pollwatcher should be marking off the names as each one votes. At about 3:00 p.m. and again at 5:00 p.m. the lists should be picked up by runners and delivered to a central telephone

headquarters, where other workers should contact each person on the list who hasn't yet voted. If any voter needs a babysitter or a ride to the polls, more workers in your machine should be available for this service. The name of the game is get your friends to the polls. This writer once saw a Drake University professor and his student workers quadruple the vote for his party in a precinct over the previous election by simply working the voting lists.

Students may also participate in the registration of voters. Those who will be 18 years old at the time of the next election are eligible to vote, and many older voters, because of apathy or change of address, are no longer eligible to vote. To set up registration teams, any registered voter may be sworn in at the county auditor's office and be qualified to register other voters within the county. Working in pairs, Democrat and Republican, these teams can register people in the high schools, in churches, or in any other designated areas. Have your young people set up bi-partisan registration squads--this in itself defeats special interests. A candidate can then rely on that great silent majority, the mass of middle groups voters.

MOST AMERICANS HAVE COME TO FEEL THAT IF THERE IS VERY LITTLE POLITICAL ACTIVITY, THE VOTER TURNOUT WILL BE LIGHT, AND THAT INCUMBENTS AND JOB-HOLDERS WILL SIMPLY BE RE-ELECTED. If, however, a concerted voter drive is made, close to 90 percent of the voters can be brought to the polls in your precinct. People will vote because they know that everyone else is voting, and they will feel that their votes do count.

In a precinct at West 51st Street and Grand Avenue in the early 1950's, Des Moines was once embarrassed to find more ballots than voters, indicating extremely poor poll-watching and voting procedures. In this same era West Des Moines once had 103 percent voter participation - an investigation revealed that people were registered and voting for 15 years after they had died....Few precincts may have fraud, but apathy

may needlessly rob your community.

In the early 1950's there was no precinct organization in Des Moines. A Democratic Polk County chairman of 20 years standing recently commented "The only democratic machinery consisted of three sound trucks" and the Republican organization was certainly no better. High school students can successfully initiate political organization.

Part IV

Success Stories of High School Political Action

Political action is a suitable high school project, a completely workable, practical activity. An in-service teacher workshop question which invariably came up was: Were the students effective as workers, and wasn't there a lot of hassle between parties and community interests? Don't the schools get into trouble because of political jealousy?

Some years ago, working with a foundation grant, Dr. George Mather[2] secured the approval of college presidents and college boards of control for students to participate in political party work on college campuses. In February, 1971, it was this writer's privilege to participate in a meeting in Des Moines planned by Dr. Mather and attended by eight concerned people. The purpose of the meeting was to promote political action in high school. The executive directors of both major political parties were there, and candidly discussed the need for rank and file election workers as contrasted with job holders or those hired by special-interest money; also discussed was the need for more career training and job security than is now the condition in the present political-uncertainty atmosphere.

This writer or his political action class students later participated in teacher workshops during the spring and fall of 1971 in Cedar Rapids, in Cedar Falls, in a statewide in-service workshop for teachers at Hotel Fort Des Moines, and again, in the spring of 1972, in a workshop at Hotel Fort Des Moines. The political action material distributed at these meetings was also used at Drake University. Dr. Mather says simply that participation by students

[2]Dr. George Mather, University of Iowa, Iowa Center for Education in Politics

cannot and must not be disrupted. The Wagner Act forbids reprisal for union activity. ISEA enforced this in 1972, and, in the same way, student political activity must be protected. This writer has for 20 years had only pleasant relationships with political groups, has had some 1300 students participate in election work, and has never had a single incident to mar happy relationships. The following, then, is a list of incidents and activities gleaned from student political activity to support the idea that democracy in action can work in high school:

ACTIONETTE 1 -- A new experience came our way last spring....and of the 10 young East High students who bravely went to precinct caucuses, eight were elected to the county convention! Other students were amazed and, of course, wished they'd gone. This writer had not forseen this response or he might have had more young people out there. Every high school in Des Moines had a sizeable number of participants in the caucuses.

ACTIONETTE 2 -- After the 1970 election the morning newspaper headlines in Des Moines proclaimed a breakthrough in solid party control over county offices, when a well-financed, very capable, and very personable candidate was the sole loser for the party. The campaign co-chairmen for the winner in this upset were a pair of teenagers, and their organization consisted of more than 200 high school students. They had spent weeks working in the campaign, and all day on election day, from 3:30 a.m. until the polls closed. The sheriff, whose candidate had been defeated, invited the boys to "intern" at the county jail (to finish out their semester's political action activities). They accepted, and were there during the time when the reforms at the Polk County jail received nation-wide acclaim.

ACTIONETTE 3 -- Before there were precinct organizations in Des Moines, during the early 1950's, a 17-year old girl was the self-elected precinct

captain of five precincts and was helping her friends to build voter registration files. Two boys were given an eight day, expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., and the U.N. by the Friends Service Committee in recognition of their work in building political precinct organizations.

ACTIONETTE 4 -- Among some 1300 letters verifying student political action for school credit is one indicating that 43 students had contributed 161 hours in a fund-raising campaign. Each student is listed separately in this 1959 letter, with the number of hours he had worked, but the letter doesn't say how much money each student had turned in to the fund...almost all the time was expended in only two precincts, and the verifying party workers were the precinct committeemen.

ACTIONETTE 5 -- 1959, a letter from President Eisenhower's press secretary James Hagerty, indicated White House interest in high school student involvement and thanked East High students for their work in that years national election. The letter was sent because a Polk County Republican chairman, now a district judge, reproted in Washington, D.C. at a meeting for party workers concerning student workers at East High School. Actionettes four and five seem to tie in well together. Actually, upon checking, Actionette four was a Democratic project, and five refers to Republican workers.

ACTIONETTE 6 -- A Polk County Republican chairman's letter thanks students for their work and includes an offer to organize a political club at the school. The request was not approved at that time by the school administration.

ACTIONETTE 7 -- 1970. A Young Republican Club was organized and became very active.

ACTIONETTE 8 -- The political action class helped all other social studies classes in scheduling 18

different political workers and candidates as guest speakers at East High during the months of September and October, 1970.

ACTIONETTE 9 -- In a meeting for planning political curriculum change, both parties had officials present. A Democratic leader commented on the Republican student activity in the upset by the County Recorder, and Republicans promptly countered by mentioning the Democratic students working at Hoover High School where the Hoover students had engaged in a massive campaign, and their young history teacher was elected state representative over a highly-regarded Republican incumbent, in a Republican neighborhood--an incumbent who, incidentally, was recently in the news, fighting for the public interest in a Blue Cross case, as the new state insurance commissioner.

ACTIONETTE 10 -- A school bond issue had failed (Des Moines' first such experience), in spite of a 100-telephone operation on the east side alone. The following year the bond issue came up again. At school administration suggestion, the sixteen East High School social studies teachers sent their classes to the auditorium for one day. A film, "How to Win Elections," was shown; two very young East High alumni, a state Senator and a supervisor, and the Des Moines Schools' Supervisor of Social Science talked about election organization. This program was repeated each hour all day in order to allow all students to attend. Each social studies teacher received an enlarged precinct map upon which students wrote their names, indicating which houses and which blocks each canvasser would cover. Eight hundred students delivered 47,000 handbills in three nights, tripled the "Yes" vote over the previous year (in this 15,000 home area), and the bond issue carried by 1/2 of 1 percent! Every high school in Des Moines had student workers in this campaign. This account is only one more example of successful canvassing by young people.

ACTIONETTE 11 -- All political parties have had student participants, and the students were given credit for the work they did for the candidates and parties of their choice. This, then, is not only Republican and Democrat but also American Independent party students who worked in a George Wallace campaign, some who were aligned with the John Birch Society, etc. Once, simultaneously, students and teachers had a choice of listening to the executive director of the Republican Central Committee; a candidate representing the American Independent party; and the executive director of the Democratic Central Committee. This activity had been announced as a worker-recruiting project. Another time a Democratic candidate for lieutenant governor spoke in the cafeteria while a Republican state treasurer was talking in the auditorium.

ACTIONETTE 12 -- One morning in 1954 the East High principal met this writer at the schoolhouse door. A political maneuver left the East Side Kiwanis Club without their patronage slice--the proposed East Side swimming pool on the ballot...the petitions had been invalidated and an entire new set was due by 4:30 that day. The principal knew that the students had previously worked out the area's precinct organization for their classroom political activities, so he dismissed the first and second hour classes of this writer and a fellow teacher's class to circulate the petitions for signatures. At 9:30 the first class was back in school. At 10:15 the job had been completed--the petitions were filed, the project was later approved by the voters, and Teachout Pool became a reality. In retrospect it seems odd that apparently no one realized then that the carriers of petitions should be registered voters.

ACTIONETTE 13 -- Students have interned for school credit at the county jail, at several campaign headquarters, at the police station, have done research for a district judge on court records,

and for a supervisor working on streamlining archaic county procedures. The governor once gave a party for thirty-five high school students in the capitol reception lounge, and they have had occasional invitations to the governor's inaugural ball. Political action students have visited a number of state and local agencies, and discussed first hand with the personnel, e.g., the Polk County home, the problems of the agencies.

ACTIONETTE 14 -- Five students, under adult supervision, worked for 22 hours in Omaha, on the week end preceeding the 1972 Nebraska primary election. The party worker who verified the work commented, "and they really worked."

ACTIONETTE 15 -- Several students, again under adult supervision, went to California and worked in that state's primary during the first week in June, 1972. Senator McGovern's campaign assistant had contacts in Des Moines.

ACTIONETTE 16 -- Students often show up with autographed "thank you" notes for their help to candidates during a campaign, and this writer has received hundreds of sincere letters verifying time and type of work involved. Many, many of the students have amassed more than 90 hours each, and this year about eighty students from all over Des Moines worked for political action credits in Adult Evening High School. This was, of course, independent study credit.

Part V

Adults in High School Political Action

Teachers fear that the idea of having young people involved in politics while they are still in high school is too new and not acceptable to "establishment" people. Teachers are aware that these young workers can be tireless, loyal, and estraordinarily effective--for a McGovern or a McCarthy. This section of the handbook will be devoted to supplying the teacher of a political action class with a list of Iowa and Polk County people who have been working with high school students since 1951, or who have been helping the cause of political action in high school.

The people lister here have helped this writer and may frunish an answer to the question, "Who has worked with political action for high schools, or has supported the idea of youth in politics?"

Maurice Baringer, state treasurer
Vernon Bennett, state representative
Richard Blome, editor of Midland Schools
Earl Bridgewater, principal at East High School, Des Moines
James E. Brick, Democratic county chairman
Charles Dickey, Republican central committee
Minnette Doderer, state senator, Democratic candidate for lieutenant governor, 1970
District Judge Allen Donielson, former Republican Polk County chairman
Mike Doyle, former Democratic Polk County chairman
Kenneth Fenton, county recorder
Paul Franzenburg, former state treasurer, Democratic candidate for governor, 1972
June Franklin, state representative
Walter Galvin, ISEA, immediate past-president
Mike Getto, campaign manger for Governor Ray,1970
George Hampel, Jr., DMEA, Executive Director

Lex Hawkins, former Democratic Polk County chairman
Wilbur Hildreth, Polk County sheriff
David Houghton, campaign manager for county recorder
Harold Hughes, U.S. senator
Dr. Gareld Jackson, Director of Adult Education, Des Moines Public Schools
John Kilgore, supervisor, social science, Des Moines Public Schools
Cliff Larson, executive director, Democratic state central committee
Russell LaVine, American Independent Party
Sugar MacCauley, Republican Polk County central committee
Irene Maley, former Polk County recorder
Don Mahon, candidate for U.S. congressman, fifth district, 1970
Thomas Martin, U.S. senator, deceased
Norma Matthews, candidate for state representative, 1970
Manford Meier, candidate for state representative, 1970
Jack Miller, U.S. senator
Richard Olson, Des Moines Mayor
District Judge Leo Oxberger, former Republican Polk County chairman
William Palmer, state senator
Clark Rasmussen, former executive director, Democratic state central committee
Robert Ray, Governor
Steve Robinson, executive director, Republican state central committee
Paul Romans, Republican Polk County central committee
Duane Semler, executive director, Polk Suburban UNISERV
Katie Shinstine, city clerk, Des Moines
Lloyd Smith, state auditor
Neal Smith, U.S. representative, fifth district
J. Edgar Stonecipher, retired, Director of Secondary Education, Des Moines Schools
Kenneth Stratton, ISEA, past president
John Tapscott, state senator, Democratic candidate for governor, 1972

Bennett Webster, Republican Polk County chairman
Tom Whitney, Polk County supervisor

In conclusion, consider that both political parties have publicized their actions in incorporating young people into party work, and have elected them to conventions. The 18-year old vote was recently passed and signed by President Nixon. It is difficult to conceive of any politician's being against youth participation in politics or the public school's guidance in this activity. The only thing anyone could ask for is to be given an equal chance for participation. One criticism is that a political imbalance might exist in a particular school, a factor certainly evident in this writer's experience. However, the minority group invariably developed wonderful esprit de corps and usually was a spur to make more active the larger political group. Instead of criticism, officials of both parties offered praise.

Part VI

Answers to Critics of High School Political Action

Some critics wonder about the foot-loose life style of some of the young people participating in the national election process. Writers and politicians have long criticized the vested interest groups, as evidenced by anti-trust acts and Theodore Roosevelt's "big stick" programs, among many such public interest laws. It isn't democracy until we tap the efforts and thoughts of all the people, and in particular (for this pamphlet), the time, interest, and energy of high school young people. The Pentagon has reportedly spent $54 million of tax money to publicize the needs of the war machine. Shoe leather makes an excellent balance for money in campaigning. If we involve all young people, we can produce candidates with platforms based on door-to-door, grass-roots, pamphlet support.

Some fear that the parties will cause trouble for the schools. Dr. Mather flatly says that in this day of broad media reporting techniques, it couldn't happen. If the school gives all political parties and all students equal chances for participation, unfair criticism would be extremely self-defeating and would boomerang for the critics. America has been developed around the principle of freedom of thought and expression, depending on the axiom that, given enough exposure, the right solution will be found. If the framework exists for developing exposure for all views, extremist policy should be minimized.

Where no precinct organization exists and people are elected by default, it is time to build a two-party system. Every responsible party worker will testify that the best way to eliminate a liability type of elected official is to have a good opposition party smoke him out. A one-party county will eventually wind up re-electing weak, sometimes

senile, inefficient, or patronage-type incumbents. A party, in order to remain healthy, needs strong opposition--intra-party fights will tend to destroy the ogranization, but the two-party system, operating from a citizen-participation base will produce good government.

A criticism leveled by some teachers against student participation activities can be summed up in such a remark as, "Mickey Mouse--why can't school things be for school and community things for the community?" When translated, it says, "If the kid gets bored with the book, there's something wrong with the kid." What we have been doing in schools will result in a 20 percent voter turnout for primary or municipal elections, and participation by the extreme opposite ends of the political spectrum.

School administrators are thinking of dropping some of the traditional social studies requirements. Our real need is to make the social studies curriculum relevant for the students. We social studies teachers must accomodate to a changing world or be eliminated. Even then, it is this writer's opinion that if students saw direction and purpose firsthand, social studies classes would become an integral part of the election process, and the students would see far more clearly the purpose in studying United States History, or World History, or American Problems. The students would be working, through political parties and government, with adults who were trying to weigh citizen understanding in order to develop winning elections. When a student in a caucus is topped short by, "But the public doesn't comprehend that--let's play the issue down," than the student becomes aware that previous classes must not have had interest or understanding, and learned only to get past the next test. There is nothing so effective as using what you've learned to make it meaningful.

Play It Down

Other critics of student participation in politics, particularly on the national level, conclude that the long-haired hippies are the only young people interested in politics, and therefore political action in high school is anathema. Instead of its being encouraged, it should be played down. Government should be left to conservative professionals and business interests, or we shall go bankrupt and end in anarchy.

Liberals counter by attacking the rape of resources and with the ecology story, and point up the new social needs of people in a rapidly changing technological economy. It is ineffective to simply buy more guns for police when a gun dealer is not in violation of the law, although the purchaser has written false information on his purchasing permit. It is equally evident that people who aren't trained for the available jobs may turn to crime, or escape in a haze of drugs and alcohol, or both. We persist in applying old solutions which never were very effictive, to new needs. The credibility gap widens, and we brush it all under the rug with a "Well, that's politics."

In one of his infrequent press conferences, President Nixon was being rather vigorously badgered by the reporters. The president brought the entire proceeding back to earth when he suddenly changed tacks, told them they knew the situation just as well as he did, that the name of the game was politics, and that in order to get support for worthy goals, you must bargain and get one thing done at a time. Let us consider the following:

ITEM -- Thirteen thousand tons of nerve and mustard gas removed from Okinawa
ITEM -- The space program reduced by 90 percent
ITEM -- 90 percent of our troops brought back from Viet Nam
ITEM -- Trips to Moscow and China, and sale of planes to China

On every economic, social, military, and international front we are moving, and we shall go at exactly the pace that politics dictates, with that politics being dictated by citizen participation as opposed to special interest policies. If every student accumulates a folder of his political participation which is totaled and credited at the time of his graduation, the student will see more purpose in social studies. At the same time statesmen will suddenly have a fantastic pool of available manpower to espouse meaningful programs.

To Tell the Truth

The immediate response to the word politics or to "political involvement" is "Trouble". Teachers say that if they propose a political action program, the reaction of the administration will likely be, "What are you trying to do, get us all fired?" General Braddock was defeated by Washington because Braddock's army was living in the past. WE LIVE IN A TRANSITION ERA WHEN COMMUNICATION IS INSTANTANEOUS. OLD-TIME POLITICS WAS PREDICATED UPON KEEPING THE PUBLIC IN THE DARK, AND TODAY THE CREDIBILITY GAP HAS BECOME A FACTOR. Four centuries ago Machavelli advised the Duke of Florence never to tell the truth--it would keep their enemies off balance. In 1923 Walter Hines Page, our ambassador to the court of St. James in London, wrote that a diplomat was an honest man hired by his people to lie for them. Josef Stalin in 1943 remarked that to talk of honesty at a conference table was like talking of wooden iron or dry water. As noted, President Nixon commented that the name of the game is politics, that you trade support, and that you get one thing done at a time.

The history of American government is one continuous story of the struggle between special interests and the public interest. When things get bad enough, the public becomes aroused and something is done. Finally the public relaxes and the cycle is repeated. High school political action offers a

continuous new supply of neighborhood workers, responsive to long-term public-interest needs. The students develop into interested, participating citizens. That "The truth shall make you free" is still completely true today. There is nothing wrong with democracy, but oligarchy is not democracy. When the social studies do more than inform, and put knowledge into action, we shall have interest and retention and liberated politicians who will become statesmen. Democracy is terrific -- let's make it work!

Personal Notes